

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY:

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I write in support of SB 301 regarding insurance coverage for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) treatment for autistic children. I am the father of a 4 year old boy, Evan, who is on the autism spectrum.

Our experience is not unlike other parents who are devastated when their autistic children are diagnosed. We felt extremely isolated, hopeless and confused. Autism is bewildering, certainly, but out of the tens of thousands of dollars we spend annually to help Evan, I can say without hesitation that ABA therapy has been the only therapeutic intervention which has demonstrated measurable and clear results. We continue to pay out-of-pocket at the rate of \$85/hour for ABA therapy, for 4-5 hours per week, although his prescription is for almost double the amount of therapy. This is an incredible financial burden despite my full time position as the General Counsel at Walker Digital, the founding research laboratory behind priceline.com. We continue to slide further into debt precisely because of the uncovered cost of ABA therapy.

We are currently in the protracted process of seeking ABA coverage for Evan from the Shelton Board of Education through the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act's IEP process. However, the IEP process is slow, and filled with traps for the unwary and vulnerable parent. I have been a member of the Connecticut bar since 2002, practicing sophisticated corporate and transactional law, and can say firsthand that the IEP process is downright daunting, requiring me to hire a special education attorney to represent Evan. Every day that goes by during this legal appeal without complete ABA coverage for Evan is a tragic waste, as research shows that "early intervention" is critical for long term outcomes.

So, you can see why ABA coverage through insurance is necessary. I hope that you pass the bill, but add language clarifying that the departments of education in the towns and cities throughout Connecticut would not be absolved of their responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act despite SB 301's passage. After all, not everyone has insurance.

Finally, I note that in my capacity as the founder of a company whose mission is to develop software aids for children with autism, I have surveyed the market for every

alternative product and therapy under the sun. ABA therapy is by far and away the leader in terms of allowing autistic kids to reach their maximum potential. An investment in ABA early in a child's life will reduce the downstream costs to Connecticut taxpayers very significantly. As more and more kids are diagnosed as on the autism spectrum every day, failure to act now will make today's economic challenges pail in comparison to what life will be like when the taxpayers have to support the millions of moderately to severely autistic persons who will not be able to hold jobs or care for themselves because they didn't receive ABA treatment at an early age.

If I can provide any further information about our experience with ABA, or answer any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the below address.

I appreciate your consideration.

Respectfully,

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